

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	EEB-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	INL-00
	DOTE-00	DS-00	DHSE-00	OIGO-00	FAAE-00	VCI-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00	DCP-00
	NSAE-00	ISN-00	OIG-00	NIMA-00	PM-00	GIWI-00	ISNE-00
	DOHS-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00	SCRS-00
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 HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000039

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2025
 TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [ER](#)
 SUBJECT: THE ISAIAS REGIME'S SECURITY POSTURE

Classified By: Amb. Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4(d)

11. (C) 7,000 PRESIDENTIAL GUARDS

Eritrea boasts one of the largest standing armies in Africa and is among the most militarized societies in the world. To protect himself and his regime from assassination, coup d'etat, army mutiny, or a foreign commando strike, Isaias has created three separate Presidential Guard units of about 2,000 troops each, according to a well-connected Eritrean businessman.

-- These elite solders get extra pay, have modern equipment, and receive specialized training. Most are currently stationed in or near Asmara, including a sizeable group lodged about 800 yards from the DCM's residence.

-- The three units are nominally led by Major General Filipos, but in reality Isaias personally commands each one. In addition, Presidential Guardsmen also serve as jailors for the G-15 (senior Eritrean officials arrested in 2001).

-- Isaias' right-hand man is Colonel Tesfaldat Habteselassie, who commands the 70-man presidential bodyguard detachment.

-- The source also reported that the head of Eritrea's Office of National Security, General Abraha Kassa, suffers from a bad heart and comes to his office irregularly.

12. (C) 11,000 TROOPS SENT TO ASSAB

In early February the Eritrean military sent 11,000 troops from the Asmara area to Assab, according to a reliable Arab contact, supposedly to deter any Ethiopian thrust to seize the port of Assab "now that Eritrea is weakened by UN sanctions." Other observers speculate the troop movement may be related to the reported February 15 Afar rebel attack in southeastern Eritrea in which fighters of the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) allegedly killed or wounded 37 Eritrean troops. (RSADO, thought to be supported by the Ethiopian government, has previously issued seemingly exaggerated claims of victories against Eritrean forces.) The businessman cited above says even Presidential Guardsmen have recently been heard in bars grousing about President Isaias, that Isaias is "completely alone," and that ordinary soldiers from the Red Sea littoral are restive due to reports

of starvation in their home areas.

McMullen